



Diyala Province, Iraq

FOB WARHORSE

30 October 2008

Greetings, to the families and friends of the Arctic Wolves! It is hard to believe that it has been nearly two months since our deployment ceremony on 11 September 2008.

So Where are We?

By now most of you know by talking to your Soldier that the brigade is located in Diyala Province in northeastern Iraq. We are approximately 5,870 miles from Fort Wainwright, Alaska. The Brigade Headquarters and five of our seven battalions are on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse. The 3-21 IN Gimlets are located on FOB Normandy and the 5-1 CAV Blackhawks are located on FOB Caldwell. Our companies, batteries and troops are located on various Combat Outposts (COPs) all over Diyala Province.

What about Diyala?

A few facts about Diyala Province, Iraq. Diyala extends to the northeast of Baghdad as far as the Iranian border. Its capital is Baqubah. Diyala covers an area of 17,685 square kilometers (6,828 sq mi). That is an area approximately the size of the state of Maryland.

Diyala has been inhabited continuously since pre-Islamic times as a center for agriculture and commerce. The name itself is thought to have come from the Assyrian language Baya 'quba, meaning "Yacoub's (Jacob) house."

Because of its proximity to two major sources of water, Diyala's main industry is agriculture, primarily in large date palm groves. It is also recognized as the orange capital of the Middle East. Although it is often referred to as the "bread basket" of Iraq Diyala is suffering from one of the worst droughts in nearly 50 years and we can see the effects of the drought throughout the Province.

Baqubah (Arabic: قبوقع) is the capital of Iraq's Diyala Governorate. The city is located some 50 km (30 miles) to the northeast of Baghdad, on the Diyala River, just outside Iraq's so-called Sunni Triangle. The estimated population of Diyala is 1,224,000 people.

What have we been up to since we left Alaska?

As you might imagine, the Wolves have been extremely busy since we deployed. The statement “on the move” is appropriate, but is very much an understatement! We have moved from Kuwait to Iraq on everything from C-17s, C-5s, C-130s, CH47s, UH-60 helicopters and every type of tactical ground vehicles in the Army’s inventory.

Many of us were so ready to get out of Kuwait that we would have walked the 360 miles from Kuwait to Diyala. The good news is that as of 15 October all of our Soldiers arrived in Diyala and are now settled in at their FOBs or COPs. Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks we had was to move over 600 containers, over 300 Strykers and countless other pieces of equipment from Fort Wainwright, Alaska to the Port of Anchorage to the Port of San Diego, to NTC, back to San Diego, and then loaded on a ship. We moved to Kuwait, offloaded, moved to training areas in Kuwait and finally, shipped equipment by convoy or flew it into Iraq. I may have left out a stop or two, or a mode of transportation, but I am sure you get the point – a complex task with lots of moving parts.

Some of the many tasks our Soldiers have accomplished:

- Skills training and weapons firing in Kuwait
- Checking and rechecking Stryker systems and prepping for movement to Iraq
- Getting adjusted to the heat, the dust and now the rain of Iraq
- Stryker drivers training, we have a lot more stuff hanging off of them now
- Moving to and setting up operations on our FOBs and COPs
- Performing checks on our individual and team equipment prior to moving out on combat patrols
- Learning how to get around and survive in our new sector
- Learning about our Iraqi Army and Police counterparts
- Assisting the Diyala Provincial Government with governance
- And hopefully staying in touch with you all

So, How Are We Doing?

Overall we are doing great, now that we have gotten to our new “hooch” away from home. We have started many work projects that will improve the quality of life on our COPs and FOBs. Morale is high and we have completed our Relief in Place (RIP) and Transition of Authority (TOA) with our 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment comrades from Vilseck, Germany. The 2nd SCR was in Baghdad, Iraq for 10 months and in Diyala for five months; they were glad to see us to say the least. We wish them a joyous homecoming and appreciate their service and many sacrifices.

What is next for the Wolf Pack?

We will continue to assist our new Iraqi Army and Police partners with maintaining a safe and secure environment which is essential to get at one of the most important efforts we have – to ensure governance, justice and the rule of law for all citizens of Diyala.

As I am sure all of you will be happy to know, I have decided to begin our Environmental Leave Program (“mid-tour leave”) early. We now have approval to begin our Environmental Leave Program period on 18 November 2008. We decided to start no later than the 18th so those who chose to go on leave during this period of time would have a good chance to be home in time for a nice Thanksgiving meal with the family. For the rest of us back here in Iraq do not worry, we will all eat very well on Thanksgiving Day.

On 24 November 2008, CSM Cervantes and I will fly around to each FOB and conduct a Patch Ceremony, awarding each battalion with their 25th Infantry Division Combat Patches. Many of our Soldiers have already earned Combat Infantry Badges, Combat Action Badges and Combat Medical Badges and many more will follow.

One of our most significant missions in the coming year will be the facilitation of elections in Iraq. This will be a monumental event for both Diyala and Iraq and will certainly set conditions for the future of Iraq. In Diyala we have plenty to keep us busy. We are and will continue to be involved in assisting the Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the government of Diyala with: improvements in agriculture, voting, computer automation, business management, drip irrigation systems and water management projects, human rights, medical care, law enforcement, rule of law and justice, and we are even helping the Iraqi Police with starting a Military Work Dog program. Plenty to do over the next eleven months for sure!

Fallen Members of the Pack

I am sure you are all tracking the loss of two of our Arctic Wolves here in Diyala. On 16 October 2008 we received a rocket attack on FOB Warhorse. Twelve of our warriors were injured in the attack. Sadly, SPC Heath Pickard and PFC Cody Eggleston, both assigned to Charlie Company, 1-5 Infantry, departed our ranks as a result of wounds sustained during the attack.

We memorialized our two heroes, in two separate Memorial Services, here at FOB Warhorse. Hundreds of Soldiers attended both services which served as great tributes honoring two American Heroes who will be missed by all of us. I would humbly ask that we all continue to pray for the Pickard and Eggleston families and for all of the great Soldiers and Families of the Arctic Wolves.

Final thoughts

The Arctic Wolves Public Affairs Team is in high gear putting the finishing touches on our monthly *Call of the Wolf* magazine. This is a monthly publication and we will mail hard copies back to Fort Wainwright for distribution to the Echo Company of each battalion and the FRGs. We will also send an electronic version for posting.

I know that many of you are worried about the well-being of your Soldier. Rest assured that the Wolf Pack is trained and ready and we are taking care of each other.

Thanks for your prayers and your outstanding support to the Arctic Wolves. You should be proud of what the Arctic Wolves are doing here in Diyala and for Iraq.

We hold all of you close to our hearts and in the forefront of our minds. Hang tough!

Very Respectfully,

The Wolf 

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